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SUBJECT: SPANISH FOREIGN MINISTER MORATINOS CONSIDERING
BAGHDAD VISIT

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Newly arrived Spanish Ambassador Francisco Elias de Tejada told Ambassador Crocker August 1 that Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos is considering a visit to Baghdad in the coming weeks. Elias de Tejada said Madrid wants to strengthen relations with Iraq and sees a high-visibility visit by Moratinos as a clear way to demonstrate that commitment.

¶2. (C) In response, Ambassador Crocker underlined the great value and positive effect a Moratinos visit would have. For the first time in 50 years, he noted, Iraq has a government that is moving in a new direction and defines itself not in opposition to the West but as a partner with it. Strengthened engagement by a major European country like Spain would be another step forward in this broad effort. It would be good for Spanish-Iraqi bilateral relations and would provide timely reinforcement to recent positive developments such as PM Maliki's successful visits to Germany and Italy. Ambassador Crocker said the U.S. Embassy and MNF-I stand ready to support such a visit any way we can, particularly with regard to logistical and security requirements. Ambassador Elias de Tejada warmly welcomed this offer. He also noted that the Spanish MFA's Director for Middle East Affairs may visit Baghdad prior to Moratinos.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Considering the recent difficult period of U.S.-Spanish relations on Iraq, what we heard from Ambassador Elias de Tejada is encouraging. A visit by Foreign Minister Moratinos would provide concrete evidence that a new page has been turned in our own relationship with Spain and that Iraq's efforts to broaden and deepen its relations with key international players is gaining traction. We welcome updates from Embassy Madrid on MFA planning for a Moratinos visit as they become available.
CROCKER